

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of facilitating the transfer of data to authorized users over the Internet, the method comprising:

- (i) running a web server process on at least one host machine;
- (ii) running an ftp server process on a separate host machine;
- (iii) establishing a secure communication link between the host machines;
- (iv) establishing at least one hard link between storeroom file storage areas and customer account file storage areas, the at least one hard link comprising a pointer to a file; and
- (v) dynamically allocating customer access information from a secured database.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said establishing a secure communication link comprises using a protocol for the exchange of arbitrary sized packets of ASCII data delimited by carriage return and newline boundary markers, and using DES encryption with N keys, said establishing a secure communication link comprising:

- (a) finding the port number P used for the connection;
- (b) computing an index value I, where  $I = P \text{ modulo } N$ ; and
- (c) using the DES key residing at index I to encrypt and decrypt the data stream.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the DES encryption creates a cipher string, further comprising filtering the cipher string.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising issuing at least one change root command to limit access by the authorized users in the customer account file storage areas.

5 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the establishing at least one hard link between storeroom file storage areas and customer account file storage areas comprises creating a file pointer in the customer account file storage areas which points to a file in the storeroom file storage areas so that the file in the storeroom file storage areas can be accessed from the customer account file storage areas without copying the file to the customer account file storage areas.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising said web server process receiving a request from one of said authorized users for at least one file.

15 7. The method of claim 6, further comprising said web server process determining whether to provide said at least one file by accessing a database on a host machine through a firewall.

20 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising said ftp server process allocating space on said customer account file storage areas for said at least one file.

25 9. The method of claim 8, further comprising creating a hard link on said space on said customer account file storage areas, said hard link pointing to said at least one file, wherein said at least one file resides in said storeroom file storage areas.

10. The method of claim 8, further comprising allowing at least one of said authorized users to access said space on said customer account file storage areas.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the allowing at least one of said authorized users to access said space on said customer account file storage areas comprises issuing a change root command making said space a root directory for said at least one of said authorized users.